Remarks

Claims 1-4, 6-24 and 26-31 remain in this application, and new claim 32 is now also of record. Independent claims 1 and 17 have been carefully amended and this Request for Continued Examination has been filed in order to allow reconsideration of all of the claims.

The identification system of the present invention is a clear advantage over the state of the art as evidenced by the references of record. In the present invention, a polymer coating presents a genus identification mark that is not formed by a laser. Consequently, all of the articles can be made in advance if desired with a genus identification mark so that a significant supply is on hand.

In the present invention, a laser engraved identification mark is formed within a certain region of the coating, and the laser engraved identification mark is a species mark. Consequently, the species mark can be applied as needed during the course of the manufacturing process to the articles that already have the genus mark. As a result, only one article need be kept in inventory, since the species marks can be applied later when desired.

As an example, a dental capsule can be marked in advance with a genus identification mark that provides, for instance, a brand name and generic description such as a dental restorative material. A large number of these capsules may be made in advance and kept on hand. Next, when a particular color or shade of restorative material is placed into the capsule by the manufacturer, a laser beam may be directed to the coating to provide a species mark and identify the material in more detail. The species mark may include the name of the shade, the lot code and other specific information as needed.

None of the prior art of record even remotely suggests the concepts of the present invention. In the '929 Robertson et al. patent, a pipe label 12 is ablated by a laser 30 to form a number of markings, but there is no indication that any of the markings are made by any process other than by laser ablation. Consequently, the advantages of applicant's invention (namely, to make up a number of articles in advance with genus marks) is not realized.

Similarly, the '338 Lee patent discloses a sheet 40 with a bar code that may be formed by laser processing. Again, there is nothing in this reference that suggests that a non-laser engraved genus mark is used in combination with a laser engraved species mark.

Likewise, the '317 Hasegawa patent describes yet another article that has a label 8 with a laser engraved mark. However, there is no suggestion that non-laser engraved genus mark be used

in combination with a laser engraved species mark. Again, the advantages afforded by applicant's invention are simply not found in this reference.

The '436 Horng et al. patent describes an orthodontic band that has been engraved with a laser. Once again, there is no indication in this patent that a non-laser engraved genus mark be used in combination with a laser engraved species mark.

Furthermore, the subject matter of the dependent claims is also not taught or suggested by the prior art of record.

The specification has been amended to provide formal antecedent basis for the new language of the claims. These concepts were inherent in the application when filed and it appears that no issues of new matter have been raised.

It is believed that the present amendments to the claims should be sufficient for placing this application in condition for allowance, and such action is courteously appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

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Version with markings to show amendments made:

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Optionally, the coating 20 may have a color that represents a non-laser engraved genus identification mark. For example, the coating may have a red color for use with a product container having a black exterior surface to represent one series of dental restorative materials especially suitable for use with posterior teeth, while the coating may have a green color for use with a product container having a black exterior surface to represent another product series of restorative materials that is especially suitable for use with anterior teeth. The first identification mark 22 can then be used to create the species identification mark that identifies the color or shade of the restorative material within each of those series.

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. A set of articles, each article comprising:

a body having an exterior surface with a certain color;

a polymer coating extending over the exterior surface, the coating having a color that contrasts with the color of the exterior surface, the coating including a certain region and also a certain area that is spaced from the certain region, the polymer coating presenting a non-laser engraved genus identification mark in the certain area; and

a laser engraved identification mark formed within the certain region of the coating, the laser engraved identification mark being a species mark.

17. A method of marking a set of articles comprising the acts of:

selecting a polymer coating having a color that contrasts with the color of an exterior surface of each article;

applying the coating to a certain region of the exterior surface of each article; and

directing a laser beam toward the coating with sufficient power to cause at least a portion of the coating to undergo a chemical reaction and create an identification mark, wherein the act of directing the laser beam toward the coating creates a species mark, and wherein the act of

applying the coating to the exterior surface of the article includes the act of creating a non-laser engraved genus mark that is distinct from the species mark.